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ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 291138Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/29/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UNSC](#) [XY](#) [LI](#) [FR](#) [UK](#)
SUBJECT: UK AND LIBERIA/FRANCE: UK SUPPORTIVE OF
CONDITIONS-BASED UNMIL DRAW DOWN, UK-FRANCE BILATERAL TALKS
ON PKO

Classified By: Political Minister Counsel Maura Connelly for reasons 1.
4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) should be drawn down based "on conditions on the ground" and the current UN plan for a gradual down-sizing has the UK's full support, Peacekeeping Team Leader Nicola Murray said on May 28. The UK is "quietly positive" on UNMIL. While there may be scope for changing the force's composition based on the needs on the ground in the September mandate renewal, Murray said the primary objective is ensuring that Liberia "does not lapse back into conflict." FCO Liberia Desk Office Delia Antoine also said all UNMIL-related decisions would be based on the UN's benchmarks and would be driven by the security situation on the ground.

¶2. (C/NF) On rumors of French lobbying in New York to divert UNMIL and other PKO assets to other areas, Murray assumed it was the French laying the groundwork for conversion of the European Force along the Chad-Sudan border (EUFOR) into a UN peacekeeping operation. Murray said that the UK and France will hold bilateral talks on peacekeeping operations in the next three months, dates to be confirmed.

Comment

¶3. (C) While HMG is not overly involved in Liberia, it does consider Liberia's stability critical for the region. As such, it will continue to support an UNMIL presence as long as security conditions on the ground require. The UK-France relationship on peacekeeping operations has been somewhat antagonistic, especially over EUFOR, and bilateral talks should provide an opportunity to smooth over wrinkles and plan for future coordination on other operations.

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